

NEWS

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AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN SOUTH CAROLINA: THIRD QUARTER 2005 Charleston County records highest wage growth in the State

In the third quarter of 2005, the average weekly wage in Charleston County increased by 8.5 percent over the year, the largest advance among South Carolina's six counties with employment of 75,000 or more, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. (See chart 1.) Richland County's 6.2-percent wage growth was second fastest in the State. Wages in South Carolina's six large counties ranged from \$688 in Greenville to \$505 in Horry. (See table 1.) Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that none of the large counties in the State had wage levels exceeding the national increase of 6.1 percent.

Over-the-year wage changes

Charleston County's 8.5-percent wage growth was well above average, ranking 30th highest among the nation's 322 large counties. Richland County's 6.2-percent gain was close to the national increase and ranked 126th. (See table 1.) South Carolina's large counties with wage gains falling below the national average were: Spartanburg (5.7 percent, 159th), Horry (4.6 percent, 240th), Lexington (4.3 percent, 255th), and Greenville (3.9 percent, 266th).

Nationally, the largest growth in weekly wages in the third quarter of 2005 was the 19.0-percent gain recorded by Passaic County, N.J. Rounding out the top five were the counties of Fort Bend, Texas (15.4 percent), Boulder, Colo. (13.8 percent), and Harrison, Miss., and San Mateo, Calif. (both 12.7 percent). Average weekly wage gains for Harrison, Miss., and Orleans Parish, La. (10.7 percent), were boosted as a result of the disproportionate job and pay losses in lower-paid industries following Hurricane Katrina. Overall, 132 large counties had a growth rate that exceeded the national growth rate of 6.1 percent. Five of the nation's largest counties experienced a decrease in wages in the third quarter of 2005. Clayton County, Ga., recorded the largest decline, down 5.1 percent over the past year, followed by Benton County, Ark. (-1.2 percent); Trumbull County, Ohio (-0.6 percent); Saginaw County, Mich. (-0.4 percent); and St. Joseph County, Ind. (-0.1 percent).

At the statewide level, the average weekly wage in South Carolina grew 5.6 percent from the third quarter of 2004 to the third quarter of 2005, ranking 30th in growth among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Arizona led the U.S. in over-the-year growth with a wage gain of 8.2 percent. Rounding out the top five were Florida (8.1 percent), Wyoming (8.0 percent), Virginia (7.7 percent), and Maryland (7.6 percent). (See table 2.) Michigan and Rhode Island recorded the lowest growth in average weekly wages over the past year, 4.1 percent, followed by the District of Columbia and Massachusetts (both 4.5 percent), and Maine and Tennessee (both 4.6 percent).

Wage levels

Greenville County's wage level of \$688 was the highest of South Carolina; still, this wage was \$89 less than the national average, placing Greenville in the bottom half of the national ranking at 213th among the 322 large counties in the U.S. in the third quarter 2005. Richland County's wage (\$685) ranked 221st; Spartanburg's (\$684), 225th; Charleston's (\$674), 238th; Lexington's (\$608), 303rd; and Horry's (\$505), 320th. (See table 1.) Only the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$499), and Cameron, Texas (\$486), had lower average weekly wages than Horry. Nationwide, 64 percent (206) of the large counties recorded an average weekly wage below the national level.

Among the 322 large counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$1,419. Santa Clara, Calif., ranked second with an average weekly wage of \$1,403, followed by Arlington, Va. (\$1,292); San Mateo, Calif. (\$1,268); and Washington, D.C. (\$1,265). Three of the top 10 counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., and Somerset, N.J.); 3 were located in or around the San Francisco, California area (Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco); and 3 were located in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (Arlington, Va., Washington, D.C. and Fairfax, Va.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area.

On a statewide level, the average weekly wage in South Carolina, \$637, was 18.0 percent below the \$777 national average. This placed South Carolina in the bottom one-third of the ranking at 39th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. (See table 2.) South Carolina's average weekly wage was lower than neighboring Georgia's (\$748, 20th) and North Carolina's (\$690, 28th).

Across the country, average wage levels were in excess of \$900 for the five highest paid in the nationwide ranking: District of Columbia (\$1,265), Connecticut (\$966), Massachusetts (\$947), New York (\$941), and New Jersey (\$928). Average weekly wages in the top five were at least 19 percent above the national average. At the other end of the scale, four states reported wages 75 percent or less of the national average: Montana (\$563), South Dakota (\$567), Mississippi (\$573), and North Dakota (\$581).

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.6 million employer reports cover 132.9 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly values are calculated by dividing quarterly total wages by the average of the three monthly employment levels of those covered by UI programs; this result is then divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. Over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or States for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/cew/; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Note below) and will not necessarily match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The bulletin is now available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn04.htm. Also, the quarterly press release, County Employment and Wages, presents employment and wage data for the largest counties in the U.S. and is available at www.bls.gov/cew/.

QCEW-based news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient BLS Web site location, see www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.htm.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Atlanta Information Office at (440) 331-3415. Customers in the Miami area can reach us at (305) 358-2305. This release is available in text and PDF format on the Atlanta BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/ro4/home.htm. Users may also obtain the release from the Bureau's fax-on-demand service in Atlanta by dialing (404) 331-3403.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

The measures of employment and wages reported in this news release reflect the impact of Hurricane Katrina and ongoing labor market trends. Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, with catastrophic effects in parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. This event occurred after the August QCEW reference period and before the September period. Its effects are first reflected in the September QCEW employment counts and the wage totals for the third quarter of 2005. QCEW nonresponse adjustment methods were modified for September 2005 to better reflect the impact of the hurricane in parts of Louisiana and Mississippi. For more information, see the QCEW section of the Katrina coverage on the BLS Web site (www.bls.gov/katrina/qcewquestions.htm).

Hurricane Rita made landfall September 24, after the September reference period. The impact of this event did not warrant changes to QCEW methodology for the third quarter of 2005.

TECHNICAL NOTE

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series. The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review, and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (non-economic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 6 largest counties in South Carolina, third quarter 2005 (2)

Area	Employment	Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	September 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, third quarter 2004-05 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6)	132,929.3	\$777	--	6.1	--
South Carolina	1,831.2	637	39	5.6	30
Charleston, S.C.	199.6	674	238	8.5	30
Greenville, S.C.	227.4	688	213	3.9	266
Horry, S.C.	112.1	505	320	4.6	240
Lexington, S.C.	88.3	608	303	4.3	255
Richland, S.C.	206.7	685	221	6.2	126
Spartanburg, S.C.	115.6	684	225	5.7	159

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(5) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(6) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

Table 2. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, third quarter 2005 (2)

State	Employment	Average weekly wage (3)			
	September 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2004-05	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	132,929.3	\$777	-	6.1	-
Alabama	1,905.9	669	32	6.4	17
Alaska	320.2	797	13	5.6	30
Arizona	2,511.8	748	20	8.2	1
Arkansas	1,165.7	599	46	4.9	43
California	15,443.3	887	6	7.0	8
Colorado	2,212.1	808	11	7.3	7
Connecticut	1,655.2	966	2	5.3	38
Delaware	420.1	823	9	7.0	8
District of Columbia	666.4	1,265	1	4.5	48
Florida	7,801.6	708	26	8.1	2
Georgia	3,960.8	748	20	5.2	40
Hawaii	606.0	714	24	5.8	23
Idaho	635.5	605	45	6.0	19
Illinois	5,820.7	825	8	5.9	21
Indiana	2,916.3	689	29	5.2	40
Iowa	1,461.1	641	37	6.1	18
Kansas	1,315.3	659	34	6.5	15
Kentucky	1,779.5	651	35	5.2	40
Louisiana	1,770.8	637	39	6.9	10
Maine	606.0	631	42	4.6	46
Maryland	2,526.5	854	7	7.6	5
Massachusetts	3,193.3	947	3	4.5	48
Michigan	4,353.1	787	15	4.1	50
Minnesota	2,671.9	790	14	4.9	43
Mississippi	1,098.4	573	49	5.9	21
Missouri	2,696.2	691	27	5.5	33
Montana	424.2	563	51	7.4	6
Nebraska	896.7	633	41	5.3	38
Nevada	1,242.5	750	19	6.7	12
New Hampshire	630.7	772	16	5.8	23
New Jersey	3,960.8	928	5	5.8	23
New Mexico	791.0	629	43	6.8	11
New York	8,394.8	941	4	5.7	26
North Carolina	3,903.7	690	28	5.7	26
North Dakota	335.4	581	48	6.0	19
Ohio	5,360.6	723	23	5.5	33
Oklahoma	1,482.5	612	44	5.7	26
Oregon	1,683.4	714	24	5.6	30
Pennsylvania	5,597.6	764	18	5.7	26
Rhode Island	488.9	736	22	4.1	50
South Carolina	1,831.2	637	39	5.6	30
South Dakota	381.6	567	50	5.4	35
Tennessee	2,724.0	689	29	4.6	46
Texas	9,659.3	767	17	6.7	12
Utah	1,135.1	647	36	6.6	14
Vermont	303.4	663	33	4.7	45
Virginia	3,617.7	815	10	7.7	4
Washington	2,820.6	801	12	6.5	15
West Virginia	702.9	589	47	5.4	35
Wisconsin	2,783.4	688	31	5.4	35
Wyoming	263.4	638	38	8.0	3
Puerto Rico	1,037.4	435	(5)	3.8	(5)
Virgin Islands	44.0	616	(5)	2.8	(5)

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(5) Data not included in the national ranking.

Chart 1. Average weekly wages and over-the-year percent change in South Carolina's large counties, third quarter 2004-05

